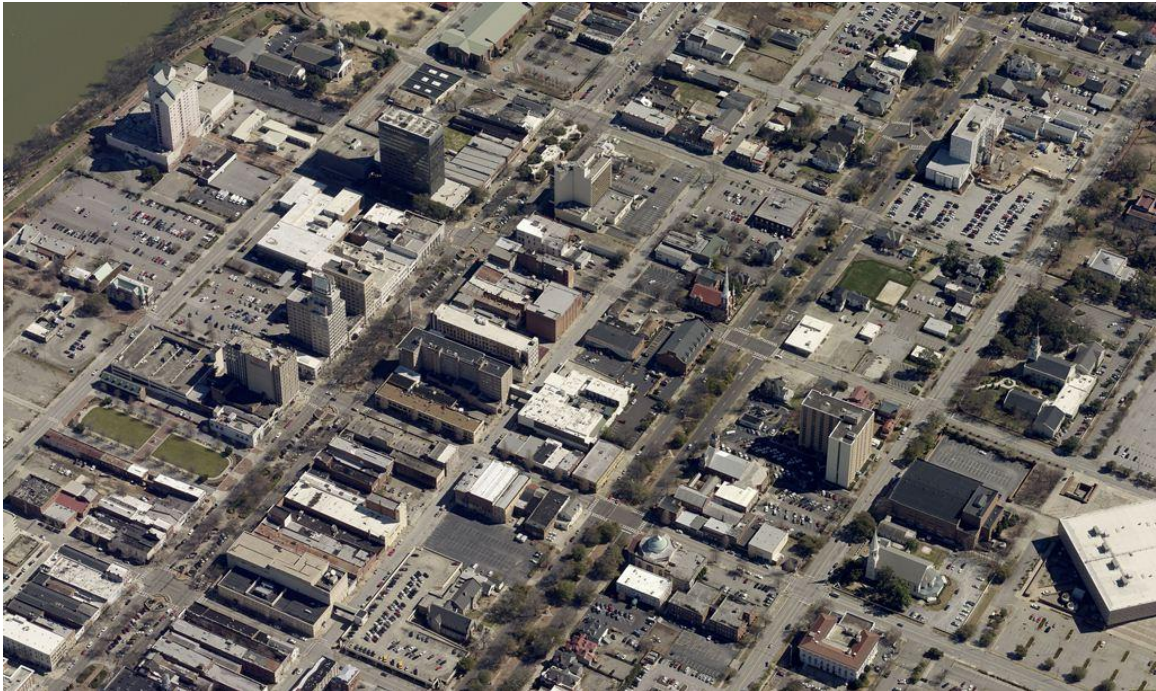




## 2014 CITIZEN SURVEY RESULTS AND REVIEW



## THE 2014 AUGUSTA CITIZEN SURVEY

Thank You for taking the time to review the results and analysis for the 2014 Augusta Citizen Survey! In order to tell you about our survey and the ideas behind its creation and distribution, we've assembled this introduction to serve as a "Frequently Asked Questions" about the survey. The questions and answers that follow will hopefully address any concerns or questions that you have about the survey, our methods, and the validity of the results.

So, on to the questions and answers...

### ***Why did Augusta do a Citizen Survey?***

Part of governing is being able to gather data, convert the data into information, and then use the information to make good decisions for the community. In a city the size of Augusta (approximately 200,000 people) it is difficult to approach people individually to solicit their opinion. Surveys are a tried-and-true method of getting data from a large number of people at one time. More data gleaned from the community means that decision-makers will have more information ready and available when important decisions need to be made.

### ***Did Augusta pay for a consultant to develop this survey?***

No. This survey was developed in-house using other governments as examples. Additionally, the questions were presented to Augusta Commissioners at a commission retreat, and their suggestions were incorporated into the survey format.

### ***How were the questions chosen?***

Augusta staff reviewed other governmental surveys and determined that most surveys of this nature (ambitious surveys that attempt to cast a wide net in the community in order to get a large number of results), had two broad categories of questions: demographic and service-oriented. Obviously, the demographics are age, gender, and race, and the service-oriented questions were there to see what the survey respondents thought about city services.

### ***Why were questions about race, gender, and age included?***

Part of the survey process is assessing who is responding to the survey. By studying the results of the survey, we can identify groups of people or geographic areas of the city that are not participating in government and encourage their participation for the next survey. Augusta is a diverse community and all opinions are valued.

### ***How were people told about the survey?***

The survey was released in early July and was announced on the city web site, which automatically pushed it out to our "Notify Me" text subscribers, Facebook and Twitter accounts. Additionally, a flyer was included in the Augusta Utility bills that went out in July, so there was a significant amount of outreach that took place. The flyer is shown on the right of this page.

*Augusta*  
Citizen Survey

Your City  
Your Government  
Your Voice



GET INVOLVED  
Take Our Survey Today!



online anytime  
[www.augustaga.gov/augustasurvey](http://www.augustaga.gov/augustasurvey)



9am - 4pm  
706.821.1008  
ACT NOW - Survey Closes August 8th

Survey Flyer

### ***How much did this survey cost?***

The “digital” part of the survey (the online survey) cost nothing since it is part of Augusta’s membership with SurveyMonkey, which costs the city less than \$300 per year. Handling phone surveys in the Administrator’s Office likewise had \$0 cost. The flyers that were prepared for inclusion in Utility bills were developed by IT staff and cost under \$1,000. A more formal, *scientific* survey (please see the next question for clarification) would have been more costly.

### ***Is this a scientific or non-scientific survey?***

This Augusta Citizen Survey is a *non-scientific* survey, sometimes known as a *straw poll* or *opinion poll*. The primary difference between a *scientific* survey and a *non-scientific* survey is that researchers typically work very hard in scientific surveys to ensure that their respondents are random, but that they are also representative of a certain population. A non-scientific survey is similar to a listener calling a radio station to voice their opinion, because the potential group of respondents is limited to those people listening to the radio AND those who are actually willing to call.

Augusta attempted to cast a broad net by including flyers in utility bills, but even so that method would still have not been scientific because not everyone receives a utility bill. Cold-calling citizens to ask if they would take the survey, which may have resulted in a larger response (and which has been done in other cities), would still have been limited because so many citizens have abandoned their land lines. People who use cell phones alone would have been excluded from the survey. In summary, reaching everyone is not as simple as it first appears.

### ***What about people who don’t have computers?***

Not every citizen of Augusta has a computer or easy access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone. The phone is a more ubiquitous communications device, so a line was set up in the Administrator’s Office specifically to handle calls related to the survey. Personnel within the office were detailed to take calls, ask the questions, and complete the responses for the citizens if they called. Out of the thousands of flyers that were sent out, there were 19 calls received by the Administrator’s Office. In the future, the entire survey may be sent with the utility bill, although there will be a printing and postage cost associated with managing the survey in that manner.

### ***What will be done with the results of the survey?***

Augusta is striving for improvement in service delivery to the citizens. The intent of the government is to review the results and then ask “Why did we receive this rating?” in a particular area, and then identify steps that can be taken to address the shortcomings. In summary: There will be **Action Items** that will come out of this survey. In each of the analyses that follow, there is a section called “In the Future...”. This section will very briefly speculate on what may be done in the future in order to act on this information. Nothing stated in the *In the Future* sections is to be considered as a final decision or action item of the leadership of Augusta – that will no doubt come after more detailed discussion and analysis.

### ***Will there be another survey in the future?***

Yes! Augusta intends to review the results of this survey, establish Action Items (as mentioned previously) and then release another survey to check our progress in the next six months to one year. The next survey will probably have many of the same questions, as well as some new ones that will be used to gauge how far we’ve come since this original survey was done. We will also evaluate the delivery mechanism(s) to ensure that we can increase the reach of the survey and get more citizens to respond.

***What if Augusta's Leadership makes a decision contrary to the survey? Did they ignore my input?***


Not at all! The questions asked in the survey were intended to gather opinions of the Augusta population. The survey was not an official referendum which requires a specific action, but this survey (and the ones that follow), will be barometers by which the leaders of Augusta can "test the waters" for new ideas, take the pulse of the electorate, and get information in a more regular manner than a four-year election cycle.

In a community as diverse as Augusta's, it is doubtless that no one will be pleased with every decision that is made. The importance of the survey is that it is a vehicle for citizen input on certain issues, similar to public hearings or town hall meetings. The survey is "nameless" and "faceless" and therefore provides anonymity for the respondent while still putting their opinion before the powers that be.

***Can I express my opinion in other ways besides the survey?***

Yes! The Augusta web site at <http://www.augustaga.gov> has a feature called *Community Voice* (one of the big green buttons in the middle of the page) that lets citizens express their opinion on certain matters. Staff reviews the questions and will forward the questions to the appropriate parties for review and comment. Citizens can also contact Augusta 311 by dialing 311 on their phones or by filing a service request online. There is also a 311 app that can be downloaded. You can read more about the app at <http://www.augustaga.gov/1742/mobileAugusta>.

## QUESTION 1

1. Are you a resident of Richmond County, GA?			Response Percent	Response Count
Yes			100.0%	659
No			0.0%	0
answered question				659
skipped question				0

This question was asked because it was deemed likely that persons who do NOT live in Richmond County would answer the survey. The result that is shown above is filtered, meaning that we removed the responses that were not from Richmond County (there were 20 who answered “No” to this question). There were 659 usable survey responses after filters were applied. Nineteen (19) of those were received by phone in the Administrator’s Office.










The US Census Bureau’s statistics for Augusta-Richmond County, GA were used for the population analysis in the survey. The Census indicated a 2013 population estimate of 197,350. Of this number, the percentage over 18 is 75.4%, or 148,802. The percentage of eligible survey respondents that actually took the survey was 0.44%, or less than ½ of one percent of the eligible population!

### IN THE FUTURE...

Augusta will take steps to increase the response to the survey. The exact steps will be identified and implemented for the next citizen survey.



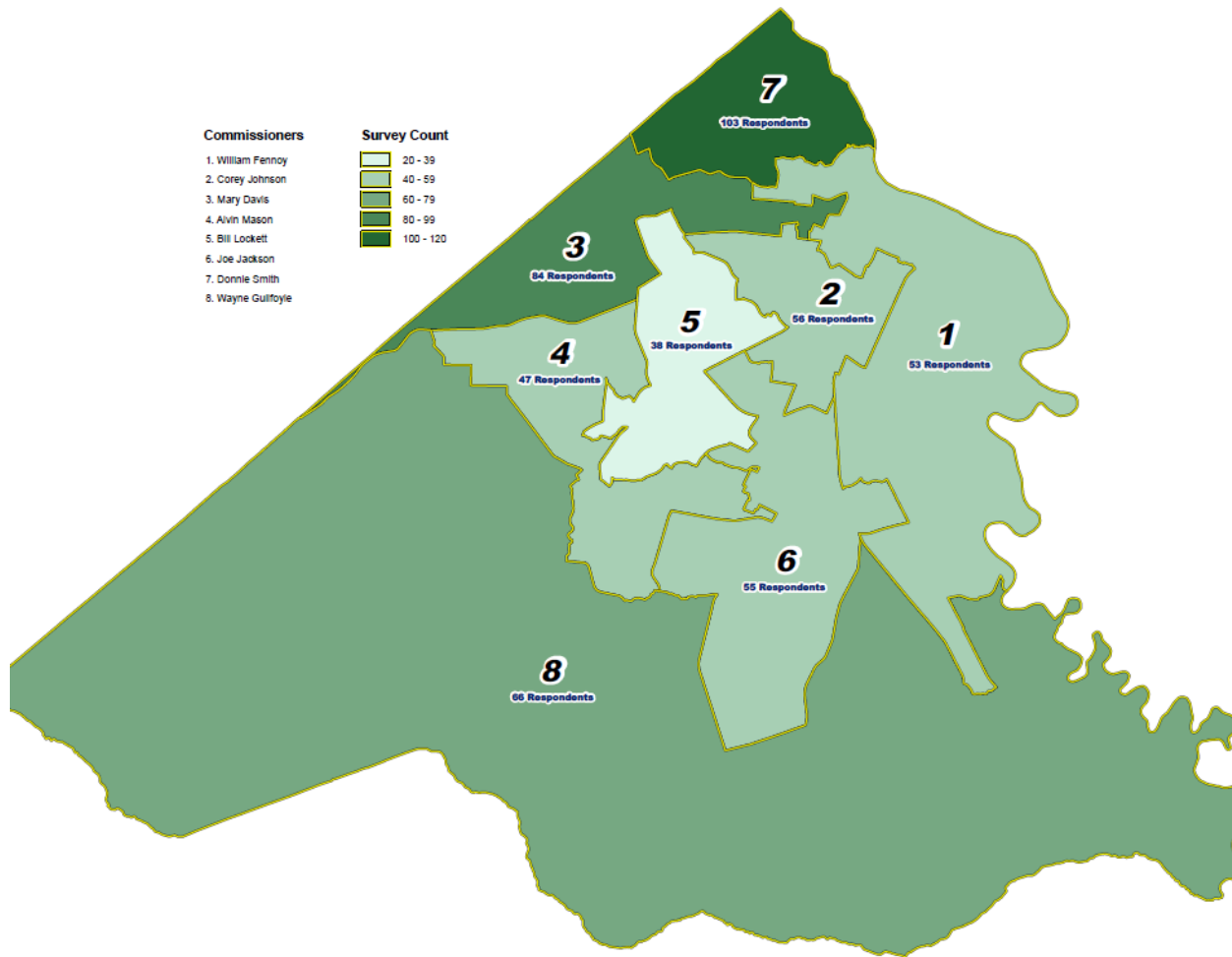
## QUESTION 2

2. Which Commission District do you Reside in?			Response Percent	Response Count
District 1- Commissioner William Fennoy			8.0%	53
District 2- Commissioner Corey Johnson			8.5%	56
District 3- Commissioner Mary Davis			12.7%	84
District 4- Commissioner Alvin Mason			7.1%	47
District 5- Commissioner Bill Lockett			5.8%	38
District 6- Commissioner Joe Jackson			8.3%	55
District 7- Commissioner Donnie Smith			15.6%	103
District 8- Commissioner Wayne Guilfoyle			10.0%	66
<b>I don't know what district I reside in</b>			<b>23.8%</b>	<b>157</b>
			<b>answered question</b>	<b>659</b>
			<b>skipped question</b>	<b>0</b>

A troubling development illustrated in these results is that nearly a quarter of our survey respondents did not know who their commissioner is. The survey did not ask for an address for each respondent, so an exact location cannot be determined, but the answers could be culled to see if respondents identified the neighborhood in which they live. This information would indicate with some probability which commission district they live in so that commissioners themselves could reach out to their constituents and raise their profile in their own districts.

Note Regarding District 6: At the time that this survey was conducted, Joe Jackson was the Commissioner from District 6. He has since been replaced by Ben Hasan.

















Augusta's IT-GIS Division compiled the results of this question on a map, illustrating the commission districts that were most responsive to the survey. The areas that were most responsive are shown in the darker shades of green. The lighter shades of green had the least amount of response. The large numerals are the commission districts, and the text below the numerals are the number of respondents.



## IN THE FUTURE...

We hope to expand the number of respondents so that they truly represent all geographic and demographic groups within Augusta. There will need to be a diligent effort to reach out through multiple means (beyond what was done for the current survey) in order to get a higher rate of response from all areas of the city.

### QUESTION 3

3. What "neighborhood" or "area" do you consider yourself to be a resident of?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Blythe		0.3%	2
Downtown Augusta		2.7%	17
East Augusta		1.1%	7
<b>West Augusta</b>		26.9%	170
South Augusta		21.9%	138
Fort Gordon		1.6%	10
Harrisburg		3.0%	19
Hephzibah		10.0%	63
Summerville / The Hill		15.1%	95
Sand Hills		0.5%	3
South Augusta		4.6%	29
Laney-Walker		0.6%	4
McBean		2.1%	13
National Hills		4.8%	30
Olde Town		1.0%	6
None of the Above		4.0%	25
Other (please specify)			48
answered question			631
skipped question			28



This list by *neighborhood* or *area* is in general agreement with the Commission District information in the preceding question. The majority of respondents fall within the West Augusta / South Augusta / Summerville / Hill area, with smaller percentages in Downtown, East Augusta and Laney-Walker.



## IN THE FUTURE...

We hope to expand the number of respondents so that they truly represent all geographic and demographic groups within Augusta. There will need to be a diligent effort to reach out through multiple means (beyond what was done for the current survey) in order to get a higher rate of response from all areas of the city.

## QUESTION 4







4. What is your gender?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Male		54.8%	361
Female		45.2%	298
answered question			659
skipped question			0

According to the US Census Bureau, females comprise 51.6% of Augusta's population (101,833). The male population is 48.4% (95,517). The survey respondents were 54.8% male and 45.2% female, the reverse of the general population. The survey respondents are skewed to the opposite of the actual Augusta gender composition of Augusta's population.

## IN THE FUTURE...

Augusta can try to involve more of the community in the survey and seek ways to get the survey to represent the people that live there. In this case, the question to ask is: How can we get more women interested in how Augusta's government works? The women of Augusta are a tremendous asset and resource – there are thousands of women in Augusta who are in positions of authority in government, medicine, the military, education, and the private sector, so there is great potential in this area.

## QUESTION 5

5. What Age Group Best Describes you?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
18-25		2.4%	16
26-35		14.1%	93
36-45		15.3%	101
46-60		37.0%	244
61-70		21.9%	144
71 and over		9.3%	61
answered question			659
skipped question			0

The age cohorts (groups) selected for the survey are not exact matches for the US Census Bureau's age breakdowns. They are; however, usually within a year of the ages in the Census statistics, so they should still be statistically viable for *general* comparative purposes. The source of the Census information is the *American Community Survey 2002-2008*, which shows the population of Augusta as 195,646.

Survey Age Breakdown	City Population for Age Group*	Population Percentage	Survey Response	Survey Percentage
18-24	24,651	12.6%	16	2.4%
26-35	29,346	15.0%	93	14.1%
36-44	22,694	11.6%	101	15.3%
45-59	38,933	19.9%	244	37%
61-70	16,629	8.5%	144	21.9%
71 and over	15,260	7.8%	61	9.3%

\*Some variance exists within this number, but it should not be a statistically significant variation

When compared to the general population, the survey respondents seem to be similar in three of the cohorts: 26-35, 36-44, and 71 and over. The 18-24 population was grossly under-represented, and the 45-59 and 61-70 population was highly over-represented. While this survey analysis is focusing on presenting facts and is

therefore not the forum for in-depth analysis of attitudes toward government, it would be interesting to see the survey results if those who were below 44 years of age were as interested in participation as their fellow citizens who are 45 and over.

### **IN THE FUTURE...**

These statistics, similar to the gender statistics reviewed earlier, do not accurately represent Augusta's population. While this statement is accurate, it does not disrespect or dilute the contribution of those who answered the survey. The opposite is true – in fact, it can be stated that the survey represents the people that cared to answer the survey. The key is to reach out and involve other groups in order to increase their involvement as well.

## QUESTION 6

6. Please identify your ethnicity			Response Percent	Response Count
African American			23.5%	155
Asian			0.8%	5
Hispanic			1.7%	11
White			69.8%	460
Other			4.2%	28
Other (please specify)				24
answered question				659
skipped question				0





Our survey ethnicity breakdown is not identical to the Census Bureau, which uses several criteria to categorize race, mixed race, and origin. We chose simpler criteria based on the populations that are predominate in Augusta: African-American, Asian, Hispanic, White, and Other. The major classifications from the Census Bureau are acceptable for general analysis.

Of our survey respondents, 69.8% (460) classified themselves as White. This is divergent from the general population of Augusta, which is 39.1% white. Only 23.5% of survey respondents classified themselves as African-American, compared to 54.7% of the population of Augusta.

### IN THE FUTURE...

There will be stronger attempts made to get the larger population base of Augusta involved in the process. The trend for the survey responses exhibited in this question is consistent with the other questions on gender and age.

## QUESTION 7

7. How long have you lived in Richmond County?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 1 Year		2.7%	18
1 to 5 Years		10.8%	71
6 to 10 Years		9.0%	59
More than 10 Years		77.5%	511
answered question			659
skipped question			0



An overwhelming number of respondents to the survey are long-time Augusta residents, which is indicative of people who believe that they have a “stake” in the community because of their long-term residency. It can be assumed that is why they cared enough to respond to the survey when so many others did not.

### IN THE FUTURE...

This could be an opportunity to reach out to new arrivals in the area to help them develop their own roots and help them make an investment in the community.



## QUESTION 8

8. Do you Rent or Own your Home?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Rent		14.9%	98
Own		85.1%	561
answered question			659
skipped question			0

Homeowners were well-represented in the survey, which can build on the conclusion in the previous question: The survey respondents feel as though they have made an investment in the community – whether it is personal, professional, or otherwise.

### IN THE FUTURE...

Statistics from the Census Bureau show that there is a large number of renters in Augusta. The home ownership rate is 55.6%, but the response in our survey was 85.1%. These results were also skewed heavily from the actual population.

## QUESTION 9

9. On a scale of Excellent to Poor, please rate the city services that are provided for the citizens.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion / Don't Know	Rating Average	Rating Count
Trash Collection	18.1% (115)	39.4% (251)	24.5% (156)	15.1% (96)	3.0% (19)	2.54	637
Parks & Recreation	3.7% (23)	34.6% (216)	33.1% (207)	18.4% (115)	10.2% (64)	2.03	625
Water and Sewer	13.3% (84)	44.3% (279)	25.4% (160)	15.4% (97)	1.6% (10)	2.52	630
Roads, Bridges, Sidewalks	0.9% (8)	14.8% (94)	39.0% (247)	43.6% (276)	1.6% (10)	1.70	633
Storm Drainage	1.1% (7)	23.0% (146)	33.1% (210)	39.1% (248)	3.6% (23)	1.79	634
Animal Services	2.1% (13)	14.7% (93)	25.8% (163)	37.4% (236)	20.0% (126)	1.42	631
Traffic Management (traffic lights, markings, traffic flow)	4.7% (30)	33.6% (213)	36.7% (232)	24.3% (154)	0.6% (4)	2.18	633
Planning and Development	1.4% (9)	15.1% (95)	30.4% (191)	43.2% (272)	9.9% (62)	1.55	629
Permits and Inspections	1.7% (11)	19.8% (125)	25.1% (158)	16.3% (103)	37.0% (233)	1.33	630
Code Enforcement	1.4% (9)	14.3% (90)	25.3% (159)	33.3% (209)	25.6% (161)	1.33	628
Transit	0.9% (6)	8.8% (56)	19.0% (120)	40.9% (259)	30.3% (192)	1.09	633
answered question							638
skipped question							21

City Services ran the gamut from Good to Poor. The results can speak for themselves in regard to the services that are most popular. Trash Collection, Parks and Recreation, and Water and Sewer fared well, but the departments dealing with infrastructure, public transit, and Animal Services fared poorly.

When the results for “Good” and “Excellent” are combined into an “Acceptable” category, we see the departments that we can assume are performing at a level that is Acceptable. The results appear in the table below.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Acceptable = Good + Excellent (%)</b>
Water and Sewer	57.6%
Trash Collection	57.5%
Parks and Recreation	38.3%
Traffic Management	38.3%
Storm Drainage	24.1%
Permits and Inspections	21.5%
Animal Services	16.8%
Planning & Development	16.5%
Roads, Bridges, and Sidewalks	15.7%
Code Enforcement	15.7%
Transit	9.7%

A glance at the information above shows that even the higher-ranked functions were still less than 60% in their Acceptable rating. Please note that “Fair” was not included in the Acceptable category (in this context, “Fair” implies, without question, that improvement is needed).

If we combine the “Fair” and “Poor” rankings together into a “Needs Improvement” category, this is what we find:

<b>Service</b>	<b>Needs Improvement = Fair + Poor (%)</b>
Roads, Bridges, and Sidewalks	82.6%
Planning & Development	73.6%
Storm Drainage	72.2%
Animal Services	63.2%
Traffic Management	61%
Transit	59.9%
Code Enforcement	58.6%
Parks and Recreation	51.5%
Permits and Inspections	41.4%
Water and Sewer	40.8%
Trash Collection	39.6%

In some cases these functions were hindered from achieving better ratings or helped from receiving worse ratings because their services are not familiar to the public.

## **IN THE FUTURE...**

The Administrator's Office will review these statistics and determine steps for the departments that fared poorly to improve, and also how the citizens can be effectively apprised that the improvements are taking place or will take place in the future.

It has been mentioned earlier that the raw data entered by respondents will permit further extrapolation of data in order to determine if there are certain geographic areas in which serves are perceived as Good, Poor, etc. If steps are taken to assess the data at that level, then the city can hone in on where improvements need to be made.

## QUESTION 10

**10. On a scale of Excellent to Poor, please rate the quality of information and digital resources for Augusta.**

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion / Don't Know	Rating Average	Rating Count
City website (www.augustaga.gov)	12.1% (77)	<b>47.9% (304)</b>	22.9% (145)	4.9% (31)	12.1% (77)	2.43	634
Augusta 311	9.7% (61)	31.9% (201)	17.9% (113)	6.0% (38)	<b>34.4% (217)</b>	1.76	630
Facebook	2.6% (16)	17.6% (110)	10.9% (68)	4.0% (25)	<b>64.9% (405)</b>	0.89	624
Twitter	1.0% (6)	9.1% (57)	8.0% (50)	3.2% (20)	<b>78.8% (493)</b>	0.50	626
Pinterest	0.2% (1)	5.3% (33)	3.7% (23)	3.4% (21)	<b>87.5% (544)</b>	0.27	622
answered question							<b>636</b>
skipped question							<b>23</b>

Based on the results to this question, it can be assumed that the survey respondents are not engaging the government via the web site or social media. In all cases, the technical resources (excluding 311) were rated poor less than 5% of the time. Most respondents had no knowledge or opinion regarding social media, but the web site itself was rated “Good” by nearly 50% of the respondents.

### IN THE FUTURE...

As with several other survey questions, this requires more information to determine its relevancy. Perhaps if a follow-up question was asked to determine if the respondent uses Facebook at all, or “how do you prefer to receive their news and information?”, or “What other means do you prefer to receive communications from the government?”, the city could make inroads to communicate with more citizens.



## QUESTION 11

11. Do you interact with Augusta in the following ways?				
	Yes	No	Rating Average	Rating Count
Receive messages via "Notify Me" from the city web site	13.7% (86)	86.3% (544)	0.14	630
Enter ideas using "Community Voice" on the city web site	7.5% (47)	92.5% (578)	0.08	625
Request services through Augusta 311	47.7% (299)	52.3% (328)	0.48	627
Follow Augusta on Facebook	23.2% (145)	76.8% (480)	0.23	625
Follow Augusta on twitter	8.1% (50)	91.9% (569)	0.08	619
Follow Augusta on Pinterest	2.8% (17)	97.2% (598)	0.03	615
answered question				635
skipped question				24

The answers to question 11 are similar to those from question 10, which can be expected because they reference the same tools. It is also unfortunate, given the amount of information that is available to citizens through the web site and social media. Based on information gathered in the city's performance dashboard (located at <http://dashboard.augustaga.gov/?guestuser=guestuser&dashID=89>), which shows an increasing number of people engaging the city via social media, it can be assumed that the people who are engaging Augusta are not the ones who responded to the survey.

### IN THE FUTURE...

The future path here is similar to question 10. The same follow-up questions and potential strategy could apply here in order to make inroads to communicate with more citizens.

## QUESTION 12

**12. Please check the box that indicates your position regarding the funding levels of these functions**

	Maintain Current Funding Level	Reduce Current Funding Level	Increase Current Funding Level	Don't Know / No Opinion	Rating Average	Rating Count
Sheriff's Office	38.5% (240)	8.8% (55)	<b>48.3% (301)</b>	4.3% (27)	2.31	623
Fire Department	44.4% (275)	4.4% (27)	<b>45.5% (282)</b>	5.8% (36)	2.30	620
Transit	28.2% (174)	17.2% (106)	<b>37.0% (228)</b>	17.7% (109)	1.84	617
Parks & Recreation	<b>38.2% (235)</b>	14.5% (89)	36.9% (227)	10.4% (64)	2.02	615
Roads, Bridges, Storm Drains, Sidewalks, and Streetlights	25.2% (155)	3.1% (19)	<b>68.7% (423)</b>	3.1% (19)	2.59	616
Judicial Services	<b>53.9% (334)</b>	17.6% (109)	12.3% (76)	16.3% (101)	1.62	620
Local Non-Profits, Agencies, Authorities	29.5% (183)	<b>36.6% (227)</b>	16.9% (105)	17.1% (106)	1.46	621
answered question						<b>623</b>
skipped question						<b>36</b>

The information in the table above essentially speaks for itself. The Sheriff's Office, Fire Department, and Transit all received nods from the survey respondents in regard to funding increases, but the biggest motion to increase funding was for Roads, Bridges, Storm Drains, Sidewalks, and Streetlights, with a 68.7% push to get increased funding.

Almost as telling was the strong indication that local non-profits, agencies, and authorities should have their level of funding reduced. This was the only category of funding that saw a recommended reduction greater than 20%.

### IN THE FUTURE...

As Augusta moves forward with budgeting and increasing the amount of government transparency and internal accountability, the information above will be a useful barometer in helping to determine which areas should receive funds.

## QUESTION 13

**13. Please indicate the priority level that you believe should be applied to the various functions of Augusta Government that are listed below. This is not a forced ranking, so you may indicate the same level of priority for multiple functions.**

	Highest Priority	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Lowest Priority	Rating Average	Rating Count
Sheriff's Office	<b>54.3%</b> (337)	34.1% (212)	8.9% (55)	1.6% (10)	1.1% (7)	1.61	621
Fire Department	<b>44.0%</b> (273)	42.5% (264)	11.8% (73)	1.4% (9)	0.3% (2)	1.72	621
Transit	12.4% (76)	23.7% (145)	<b>36.3%</b> (222)	18.3% (112)	9.2% (56)	2.88	611
Parks & Recreation	7.5% (46)	23.2% (142)	<b>46.3%</b> (284)	16.0% (98)	7.0% (43)	2.92	613
Roads, Bridges, Storm Drains, Sidewalks, and Streetlights	41.8% (258)	<b>42.8%</b> (264)	13.0% (80)	1.9% (12)	0.5% (3)	1.76	617
Judicial Services	8.8% (54)	33.2% (204)	<b>39.1%</b> (240)	14.0% (86)	4.9% (30)	2.73	614
Local Non-Profits, Agencies, Authorities	5.5% (34)	11.8% (73)	<b>30.6%</b> (189)	26.2% (162)	25.9% (160)	3.55	618
answered question							<b>623</b>
skipped question							<b>36</b>

The results in this table can be interpreted in a couple of ways by 1) looking at the bold priority numbers for each of them and 2) looking at the "Rating Average" column. Think of the Rating in the chart like a golf score – the **lower** numbers are better, which means that the Sheriff's Office would win this particular tournament.






The results show that public safety (Sheriff and Fire) are the highest in priority. Roads, Bridges, etc., a function that fared well in our previous question, is likewise held up as a priority for the government. The Local Non-Profits, Agencies, and Authorities fared poorly, receiving a double-digit "Lowest Priority" ranking.

### IN THE FUTURE...

The future considerations for the subject of question 13 are similar to those of question 12.

## QUESTION 14

### 14. Please rate your overall satisfaction with Augusta City Services in Return for the Dollars Paid through Taxes

		Response Percent	Response Count
Very Satisfied		6.8%	42
<b>Somewhat Satisfied</b>		<b>26.9%</b>	<b>167</b>
Neutral		19.4%	120
Somewhat Dissatisfied		26.6%	165
Very Dissatisfied		20.3%	126
answered question			620
skipped question			39

This question can also be restated as “Are you happy with your Return-On-Investment (ROI)?” with the City of Augusta. When you invest money in something, you typically expect a return of some kind. This holds true with stocks, bonds, mutual funds, etc. It is also true with taxes, because citizens expect to receive certain services (such as the trash collection, water and sewer, police and fire protection, etc.) for their taxes – which is their *investment* in the city government.

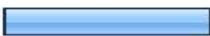

This question is one of the more important ones on this survey because it sets a baseline for improvement. When this question is broken down into its component parts, we see that 33.7% are “satisfied” in some manner. That number equates to 1/3 of the survey respondents. The more troubling number is that 46.9% are **dissatisfied** with their “Augusta ROI”.

#### IN THE FUTURE...

The City of Augusta needs to approach how to demonstrate to the investors (the citizens) that they can improve the value of the services that the citizens receive.

## QUESTION 15

**15. Would you support an increase in your overall taxes if it was required to maintain the current level of service?**

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		32.1%	199
No		67.9%	421
answered question			620
skipped question			39

Truthfully, the answer to this question speaks for itself. The vast majority of the citizens do not agree with a tax increase to maintain the current level of services.

It should be stated here that the intent of this question was to be to find out if an increase was objectionable if the tax increase would *enhance* the level of service, but the word “maintain” was left in place. It is unknown if the answer would have been different, but based on the answers to other questions (notably Question 14).

Question 12 had responses that indicated that the level of funding should be raised for various government functions. This is a fundamental challenge of government: how do you raise levels of service without raising taxes? Roads, bridges, and drainage projects are expensive. Supplying the Fire Department and Sheriff’s Office with vehicles and equipment are likewise expensive. Cutting the grass at parks and keeping the lights on at Recreation facilities also cost money. Do we embrace austerity? Do we furlough employees (many of whom are taxpayers themselves)? Do we replace stop signs? Do we close parks (and in which neighborhoods)? These are the questions facing Augusta and other municipal and county governments across the nation.

### IN THE FUTURE...

The City of Augusta needs to approach how to demonstrate to the citizens that public monies can be spent wisely and results can be seen. In other words, show that the *value* is there. Based on the answers to the previous few questions, it is obvious that the government needs to make efforts to show that spending is being done wisely, and those efforts have to be shared with the citizens.



## QUESTION 16

**16. Please indicate the priority level that you believe should be applied to various SPLOST Projects requested by Augusta Government and other local agencies. This is not a forced ranking, so you may indicate the same level of priority for multiple functions.**

	Highest Priority	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Lowest Priority	Rating Average	Rating Count
Roads and Infrastructure	<b>51.6%</b> <b>(315)</b>	34.3% (209)	11.3% (69)	1.5% (9)	1.3% (8)	1.67	610
Arts and Outside Agencies	4.2% (25)	10.8% (65)	29.2% (175)	26.3% (158)	<b>29.5%</b> <b>(177)</b>	3.66	600
Government Facilities	4.2% (25)	15.2% (91)	<b>48.4%</b> <b>(289)</b>	21.4% (128)	10.7% (64)	3.19	597
Dilapidated/Condemned Housing Demolition	23.2% (140)	25.8% (156)	<b>27.2%</b> <b>(164)</b>	16.2% (98)	7.6% (46)	2.59	604
Fire Department	37.5% (228)	<b>41.4%</b> <b>(252)</b>	15.1% (92)	3.8% (23)	2.1% (13)	1.92	608
Sheriff's Office	<b>42.2%</b> <b>(256)</b>	37.4% (227)	13.3% (81)	3.8% (23)	3.3% (20)	1.89	607
Recreation	8.4% (51)	22.7% (137)	<b>41.6%</b> <b>(251)</b>	17.1% (103)	10.3% (62)	2.98	604
Library	5.7% (35)	21.8% (133)	<b>43.4%</b> <b>(265)</b>	18.3% (112)	10.8% (66)	3.07	611
New City Vehicles	1.2% (7)	8.8% (53)	<b>36.3%</b> <b>(218)</b>	31.3% (188)	22.5% (135)	3.65	601
Technology (Public Safety Radio System, etc.)	16.0% (98)	28.5% (171)	<b>37.4%</b> <b>(225)</b>	11.8% (71)	6.3% (38)	2.64	601
answered question							<b>614</b>
skipped question							<b>45</b>

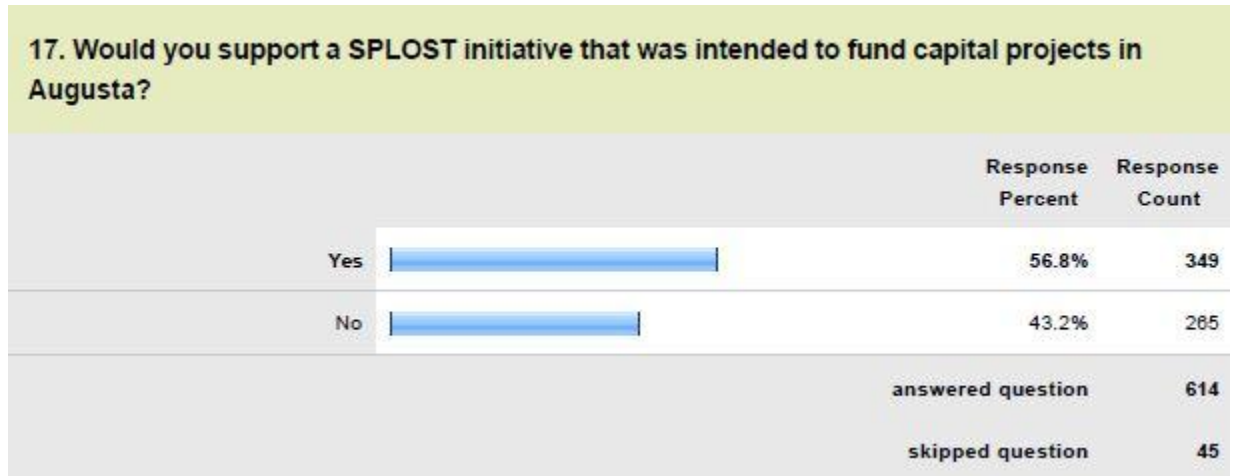
The results in this table can be interpreted by 1) looking at the bold priority numbers for each of them and 2) looking at the "Rating Average" column. This chart is like a golf score – the lower numbers in the Rating Average indicate higher priorities, which means that Roads and Infrastructure would win this Augusta tournament. The Sheriff's Office and the Fire Department would be 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, respectively. Dilapidated Housing Demolition comes in 4<sup>th</sup> and Technology rounds out the top 5.

The respondents to the survey have indicated that their priorities are in the city's infrastructure (roads, bridges, drainage, etc.), followed by public safety. The demolition of dilapidated structures, which is a Code Enforcement issues, also has roots in public safety because so many of the dilapidated structures contribute to blight, crime, and are generally unsafe.

### **IN THE FUTURE...**

Augusta must make a choice in 2015 about SPLOST VII. The previous six SPLOSTs have contributed much to the community (the city web site will have data available for SPLOST I-VI in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2015 for public consumption). The information contributed as part of this survey will doubtlessly be a subject of conversation as discussions begin regarding SPLOST VII.

## QUESTION 17






The answer to this question is quite telling, considering the answer to question 16 above. It could be extrapolated from that answer to question 16 and the answer to question 17 that the citizens who responded to the survey will support SPLOST if the right projects and priorities are chosen.

### IN THE FUTURE...

Augusta must make a choice in 2015 about SPLOST VII. The willingness of the citizens to support a SPLOST initiative should be an encouraging sign for the future, provided that the mix of projects is acceptable.

## QUESTION 18

**18. Do you believe the organizational structure of Augusta's government should be amended to make the City Administrator and the City Attorney direct reports to the Mayor's Office in order to create a more centralized form of government?**

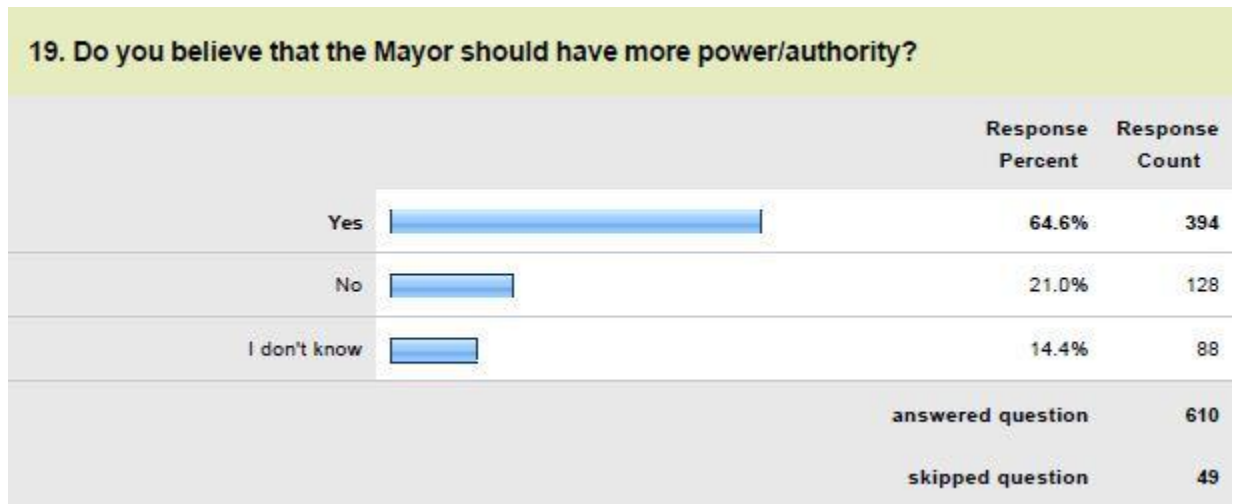
		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		76.1%	464
No		13.3%	81
I don't know		10.7%	65
answered question			610
skipped question			49

Within Augusta's current organizational structure the Administrator and the City Attorney (also known as the *General Counsel*) report directly to the commission. This question and also question 19 that follows were added to the list of survey questions following a commission retreat in the summer of 2014. The commentary on question 19 would also apply here, since having authority over more subordinates could be considered to be a "power" that the mayor would be able to wield. In any case, just over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the respondents to the survey believe that the mayor should have this particular power.

### IN THE FUTURE...

These statistics and the accompanying comments on the survey can be used to help guide the commission as they consider ideas to make Augusta's government more efficient.

## QUESTION 19



The current authority wielded by the Mayor of Augusta can be characterized as Weak Mayor – Strong Council form of government. In Augusta’s case, the mayor presides over meetings and serves as the executive, but does not hold hiring & firing power over department heads and is limited in what they can do without commission approval. The mayor can only vote when there is a tie between the commissioners on an agenda item – and that does not occur with any frequency.

Obviously, this is a question that has a lot of opportunity for speculation. In fact, it simply tests the waters by asking if the mayor should have more power without specifying which powers should be granted. To address such a question would require multiple survey questions about that one topic. In any case 2/3 of the respondents said “Yes”, while only 1/5 said “No”. It could be assumed (with all the dangers inherent to assuming) that the 14.4% that responded “I don’t know” may have responded differently if a more specific question had been asked.

### IN THE FUTURE...

These statistics and the accompanying comments on the survey can be used to help guide the commission as they consider ideas to make Augusta’s government more efficient.



## CONCLUSION

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There are a few conclusions that can be drawn from the first Augusta Citizen Survey.

### *More people need to respond*

The number of respondents to the survey was lower than expected. This places a challenge before the Administrator's Office for the *next* survey (and there will be one). More people need to respond so that more data can be gathered, which would help Augusta's leaders plan for the future. As we stated in the analysis above, while the survey is not a referendum, it is a way to gather information from a large number of people, *when they respond...*

### *The survey didn't "look like" Augusta*

It could be said that the survey "does not look like Augusta". In truth, it does not. Augusta is a majority female community, but more males answered the survey. Augusta's age groups did not respond in proportions that matched the survey, either, with older citizens responding strongly. Likewise, Augusta's smaller white population responded to the survey to a greater extent than did the African-American population. This imbalance across the board is something for officials to consider as we move ahead with other surveys. Does this invalidate the survey? Absolutely not, because *Augustans* responded, regardless of gender, age, or race. The distinction as residents of the city means that their opinions are valid and worthwhile for consideration.

### *The citizens expect value for their tax dollars*

The responses regarding taxes, value, and services were unequivocal – the respondents believe that they should receive good services from their government in exchange for their taxes. If they don't receive what they believe to be acceptable levels of service (an appropriate ROI), then Augusta is not fulfilling its mission. It will be the duty (and much-scrutinized, no doubt) of Augusta officials to ensure that funds are spent wisely and effectively.

### *The citizens are favorable to SPLOST*

The recent failure of SPLOST VII at the polls, coupled with the survey results showing that citizens favor SPLOST, are somewhat confusing. Confusing, that is, until it is considered that the citizens are in favor of certain types of SPLOST projects, particularly those that involve infrastructure and public safety. Augusta leaders will need to bear that information in mind as the next SPLOST approaches.

### *The respondents think a change is needed in governmental structure*

The final two questions in the survey approached the structure of Augusta's government. If anything, these two questions provide food for thought and the opportunity for this subject to be discussed in the future.

## A FINAL THANK YOU!

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*The officials, leaders, and employees of Augusta thank you for your contribution in responding to the survey and/or reading the results here. We sincerely hope that you share our enthusiasm for using this information to build a better Augusta for all of us!*